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ABSTRACT

The Saint Clair County Teachers' Institute (Evanston, Illinois) plans and implements a 1-day inservice for 3,000 teachers (grades K-12) each year. The committee in charge of planning and implementing the inservice is composed of two co-chairpersons (each an administrator from a local school district), representatives from the regional superintendent's office, and representatives from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Functions of the committee include: (1) making an analysis of objective evaluation data collected from the previous year's institute; (2) deciding on speakers and booking them; (3) holding group meetings with district representatives to solicit advice; (4) seeking proposals from teachers who have an instructional technique or specific program they feel would be worthwhile; (5) making final selections about the format for the institute; and (6) printing the final program. The functional cycle of the model is an on-going process which varies yearly in composition and program focus, while returning to the cooperative development theme from year to year. A unique element of the model is the cooperative element between the university, the public schools, and the intermediate state agency, which ensures that no one group controls the committee. (JM)

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A MODEL FOR COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF INSERVICE PROGRAMS BY UNIVERSITY, PUBLIC SCHOOL AND INTERMEDIATE STATE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

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Overview

Inservice efforts in Teacher Education can have great variety in scope and format, but all should have a common purpose: to facilitate the professional development of educators to become improved contributors to the efforts of Education. The task of program development of inservice can have as crucial an influence on the impact of the inservice effort as the actual activities of the program itself. The strength of the program can hinge on the type and quality of program development which creates the inservice activities.

This paper discusses an existing cooperative approach to the development of a massive one-day inservice program. The sources of cooperation arise from three distinct components of public education: university, public school and an intermediate state education agency. Together representatives from each source plan and coordinate a five hour "Teachers' Institute" for over 3,000 educators in St. Clair County, Illinois. These representatives, serving in administrative and behind-the-scenes roles, work for much of the year in development of program format, speakers, and activities of the Institute. They act as leaders in an on-going effort to improve the inservice program. Although they do not

participate as presenters or speakers, they serve a crucial function of creating the setting for an outstanding program by actually arranging the activities of that program for inservice.

Mandate for Inservice Education

Once each year the public school educational community attends the "St. Clair County Teachers' Institute" in Belleville, Illinois. This county-wide Institute provides a comprehensive K-12 inservice program for twenty-seven elementary, secondary, and unit districts from community settings of large city, suburban, and rural areas. The challenge to program development is creating a program which meets the needs of such a diverse population of educators.

The existence of such a massive inservice effort is mandated by Illinois State Law. State Statutes require a specific intermediate state agency to provide this inservice: the Regional Superinendent of Schools for the given "Educational Service Region" (ESR) within the State of Illinois. There are 57 ESRs established to serve 102 counties and each ESR has an elected Regional Superintendent. In meeting this mandated responsibility of the intermediate state agency, the Regional Superintendent is to "arrange for or conduct district, regional, county institutes or equivalent educational experiences"[1]. St. Clair County (population: 264,177)

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[1] Illinois Revised Statutes, Chapter 122, 3-11.

comprises a single ESR with the Hon. Martha R. O'Malley serving as its Regional Superintendent.

The nature of inservice programs provided in each ESR varies greatly from individual school district to multi-county programs. The St. Clair County Teachers' Institute has earned the reputation for providing a truly significant professional educational experience for its 3,300 certified public teaching personnel.

Nature of the Institute

When taking office some eight years ago, the Hon. Martha R. O'Malley inherited the past practice of holding a one-day, county-wide institute for the St. Clair County ESR. This institute consisted of a gathering of the county teachers to hear one speaker and a performing art group from one of the 27 public school districts in the county. On Institute Day, restaurants were usually inundated by early morning coffee drinkers discussing the latest happenings at local schools and it was rumored that the downtown St. Louis merchants often felt an influx of shoppers, not at all unlike the day after Thanksgiving.

Upon evaluating the situation so inherited, Mrs. O'Malley realized that this inservice did little for the image of public education in the county, to say the least about its impact on professional development of teachers. With such a limited scope of inservice activities and poor attendance, one of two alternatives appeared warranted: either drop the

county-wide effort and go to individual district programs or expend efforts on improving the past practice for inservice. By polling district administrators in the county with the choice of dropping the county-wide extravaganza or developing a comprehensive and viable program of inservice, Mrs. O'Malley found consensus among the vast majority that the Institute should be continued. Based on prior experience, however, many public school educators remained skeptical that a meaningful venture could result. Nevertheless, an effort to upgrade inservice via an Institute was undertaken.

The Institute as it exists today has evolved through several stages since 1975 and three different program formats have been utilized. Initially, a collaborative effort with a neighboring ESR was held for two years in a joint program involving 6,000 teachers. It was held on the campus of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville to accommodate the huge numbers. Planning and administration were done jointly by the two ESR offices. This format resulted in an improved situation for St. Clair County teachers since a much larger selection of speakers and activities was available. However, two major problems were created. When held in the adjacent county with a second ESR, the logistics of management by the St. Clair County ESR Office was very difficult with such a huge number of teachers involved. Also, one-way travel time for some St. Clair County teachers was up to two hours and 80 miles.

A second format was chosen for providing inservice within

only St. Clair County. It divided the program into three separate workshops at different geographical locations on the same day. These three components were based upon grade levels and were located in an urban, suburban and rural school district. This plan, utilized for only one year, did solve the problem of providing for the sheer numbers of teachers and travel hardships. However, it fragmented and polarized the county teachers into these three distinct groups with little feeling of solidarity as a county educational community. It was also impossible to provide commercial exhibitors at all sites and the loss of this important part of the overall inservice experience was significant. This separation of inservice sites did not lend itself to having large group sessions with inspirational speakers of national renown which was a highly desirable aspect of the program. In reality, the three-site format resulted in planning and implementing three institutes rather than one. This proved to be an overwhelming administrative task where the benefits derived were not commensurate with the effort required.

Still dissatisfied with the format but committed to the concept of a comprehensive inservice program, Mrs. O'Malley then opted to form a committee composed of a nucleus of her staff and several key administrators and educators in her region. The most significant contributor to this renewed attempt for a county-wide Institute was Mr. Ron Riegel, Assistant Superintendent from Belleville School District 118. In cooperating with Dr. Elmer Kirchoff, Assistant Regional

Superintendent and Mrs. O'Malley, they set out to create such a program for the 1979 Institute. A small group of educators representative of the diverse interests of St. Clair County districts was assembled by them to form an "Institute Planning Committee". For the first time, a university representative, Dr. Dan Jones of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, was included to provide a "detached" participant who could give input without preference to any constituency within the county district. The Institute Planning Committee, comprised of representatives from three educational sources, (public schools districts of the county; university: SIU-Carbondale; and an intermediate state agency: Regional Superintendent of Schools Office), undertook a cooperative development venture for inservice education. It is the nature and functioning of this Planning Committee which is the focus of this paper.

The Institute Planning Committee

As might be expected, planning and implementing a quality inservice program for approximately 3,000 teachers was not an easy task. It took a great deal of time and energy on the part of many people from the three sources.

The key support in St. Clair County came from the Regional Superintendent. She believed in the value and importance of maintaining schools whose teachers were current with learning theory and practical application of a variety of instructional techniques. She also knew that a successful

Institute was dependent on commitment and personal involvement from the teachers and administrators in the county. Consequently, she gave total freedom to those who were assigned the responsibility for the planning and coordination of the Institute. This attitude has been a key factor in the development of a high degree of commitment and involvement so necessary for the functioning of the Institute Planning Committee.

Aside from the support of the Regional Superintendent, there can be little doubt that a major component of the successful formula behind the St. Clair County Institute has been the Institute Planning Committee.. In recent years Co-Chairpersons have been selected on a staggered basis, one new Co-Chair joining and one leaving the Committee each year, with each serving a two year appointment. This avoids neophyte leadership in any particular year as there is always one Co-Chair with a year's experience. The Co-Chairpersons select additional members of the Committee and begin its work in the late summer preceding the Institute which is held in March of each year.

Presently, the Committee is composed of two Co-Chairpersons each an administrator from a local school district, representatives from the Regional Superintendent's Office, and a representative from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale with assigned service time (10% FTE). It is the task of this Committee to first make an analysis of objective evaluation data collected from the previous year's Institute.

This is based on a formal evaluation report written by the university representative on the Committee. As a result of the analysis, the Committee becomes advised regarding specific kinds of changes in format and program content which should be considered for the upcoming year's Institute, and activities which were favorably received by teachers at the prior Institute. Since the evaluation data is collected yearly for each Institute (completed by attending educators with the formal reporting assumed by the university representative on the Committee), the Committee receives feedback and can make revisions and base decisions for the upcoming program on input from the consumers of the Institute Program, i.e., the attending educators.

In addition, crucial decisions are made by the Committee regarding keynote and special large-group speakers as the first organizational task to be accomplished. Many well-known speakers must be booked as early as possible. Ideas for new speakers come from Committee members, prior evaluation data, and educators in the County. Initial confirmation of these main speakers is concluded by October.

The Committee holds several large group meetings between November and March for the purpose of briefing district representatives on the progress and nature of planning for the upcoming Institute. Reactions and suggestions are solicited during the early planning and many times recommendations are formulated from the district representatives at these meetings which result in warranted changes in the Institute.

Since the nature of the Institute now involves active participation by local educators from the county districts schools, the next responsibility of the Committee is to seek proposals from teachers throughout the County who might have an instructional technique or a specific program that they feel would be worthy of presenting at the Institute. These proposals are due by December of each year and a screening group from the Committee is appointed to evaluate and select teacher or school district presentors. Selection of presentations and notification of acceptance on the program is completed by the end of January. A few weeks prior to the Institute a large group meeting is held with all teacher presentors and individuals serving as presiders at the sessions. This last meeting assures that all understand the specific procedures to be followed on the day of the Institute.

Another responsibility of the Committee is preparation of a printed program. This is completed by members of the staff of the Regional Superintendent of Schools Office by late January so that printing bids and actual completion of printing can be accomplished by early March. In this manner the programs announcing the activities of the Institute can be distributed to county teachers prior to arrival at the meeting itself.

After several years of effort, the Institute Planning Committee has now achieved their goal of totally completing

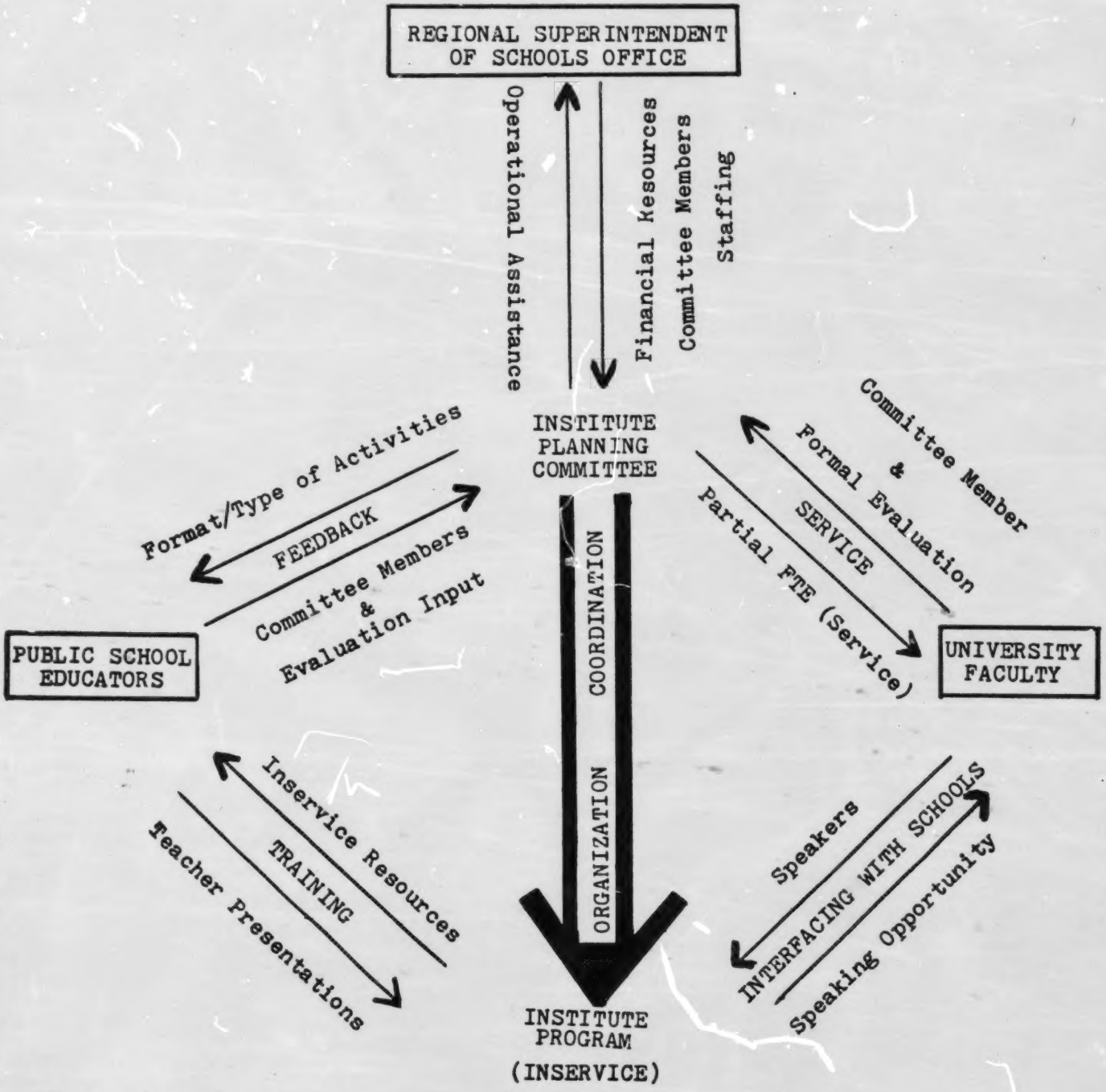
all planning aspects, including the printed program, by January of each year. In the early existence of this committee four years ago, it was not unusual to have some uncertainty about portions of the program in early March. However, with greater stability in Committee membership and having evolved in function and operation for several years, the Committee now performs its duties with much greater efficiency and a time-table of responsiblilities spanning most of the school year.

A Model for Cooperative Development

Based on the experiences with the St. Clair County Teachers' Institute over the past five years, "A Model for Cooperative Development of Inservice" is presented (Figure 1) as a potentially adoptable organizational format for involving representatives of different educational sources. The Model is based on involving university, public school, and intermediate state governmental agency representatives in a partnership to produce an inservice program. However, the intermediate state agency component (Regional Superintendent of Schools Office) could be substituted with any agency or institution with the responsibility to provide inservice programs for public schools and still maintain the Model's functioning (e.g., Central Administration of large districts, Grant Administrators, administrator in-charge of inservice, etc.).

FIGURE 1

"A MODEL FOR COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF INSERVICE"



The diagrammatic representation of the model depicts the intermediate state agency (or substitute) as the overall head of the development effort. In the case of the St. Clair County Teachers' Institute, the Regional Superintendent of Schools Office serves as the taskmaster and primary source of financial and clerical support. Based on the mandate for inservice in the particular situation (legal for the County Institute), this office (or substitute) serves to initiate and oversee the entire operation of the other sources of the cooperative development effort. In return, the other sources provide operational assistance, through the Planning Committee, to the intermediate state agency (or substitute) and carry out the planning, development, and actual activities of the inservice program. One individual serves as the Head Administrator of the entire inservice venture and comes from the intermediate state agency (or substitute). In the case of the St. Clair County Teachers' Institute this individual is the Hon. Martha R. O'Malley.

The remaining components of the Model form a functional cycle of sources for the actual delivery of the inservice. The most crucial component is the Institute Planning Committee. This component of the Model not only draws membership from the three educational sources (highlighted within blocks in Model), but is the actual entity in which the "cooperative development" is centered. Its primary function is the organization and coordination of the inservice program but performs this function as a result of input from all three

(indicated by the arrows leading to it in Model). Such input consists of the previously mentioned aspects of the Regional Superintendent of Schools Office, evaluation input as feedback from the public school educators and university service via committee membership. As a result, not only is the Institute Planning Committee comprised of sources which provide contact with the consumers of the inservice effort (public school educators) and program presenters (public school teachers and university faculty), this interaction also provides the Head Administrator with pertinent information about the desired activities and resources available for the inservice program.

The Institute Program also interacts with the public school educators and university faculty. It provides public school educators with the opportunity for training and provides an avenue for university faculty to interface with schools. Program activities are drawn from both sources (arrows leading toward Institute Program in Model). The nature and extent of the presentations are determined by the Institue Planning Committee's function of organization and coordination and are based on the formal evaluation obtained each year via the service provided by the university component. The Institute Program provides public schools with resources available from inservice and university faculty receive the opportunity to make presentations. As a result, the inservice becomes a combination of "outside" university resources and local" resources from educators of

the area being served by the Institute Program.

The functional cycle of the Model is a dynamic, on-going process which varies yearly in composition and program focus while retaining the cooperative development theme among its component sources from year to year. At the heart of its success is the fact that the cycle is not controlled entirely by one individual or educational source, but rather functions through the Institute Planning Committee created from the three sources. It is this cooperative development among educational sources which is unique to this Model and which differs from some traditional inservice programs where development and presentation of a program is conducted by one source for a particular audience (e.g., school district for its own teacher). This uniqueness has resulted in a better inservice experience for the benefit of the teachers comprising the audience in St. Clair County than what one source alone might produce. This is the potential value of adopting this Model for other inservice efforts.

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